

Responses to common misconceptions about campus open-access policies

As a growing number of academic institutions gain experience in developing campus open-access (OA) policies, common misconceptions have surfaced. This document responds to these misconceptions, offering a series of talking points developed to help respond effectively if they surface on your campus.¹

Additional resources on developing and implementing a campus open-access policy, including expert consultation, are available from SPARC. See our page on campus policies at <http://www.arl.org/sparc/advocacy/campus>.

(1) Open Access does not affect peer review

Campus OA policies concern what happens to an article **after** it has been published. They are entirely consistent with existing quality control processes, and have no impact whatsoever on the peer review system. The goal of such policies is to remove access barriers to research. Campus open-access policies focus specifically on Open Access to the peer-reviewed literature published in scholarly journals, and require that authors deposit a copy of their manuscripts after they have been reviewed and accepted for publication.

Peer review is a volunteer effort, conducted by scholars in service to their disciplines to help improve the quality of individual papers. It is an important part of the culture of scholarly research, and will continue as long as scholars believe it is of value.

(2) Campus OA policies are consistent with copyright law

Campus open-access policies are entirely consistent with copyright law. They get their force by virtue of the fact that authors own the copyright over their work as soon as they create it, without any need to register it, and hold the copyright unless they transfer it to someone else – such as a publisher. The strongest campus OA policies take advantage of this fact.

Campus OA policies generally work like this: They secure a specific non-exclusive license for the author's institution to all authors' works, and authors retain ownership and complete control of the copyright for articles, subject **only** to this prior license. Authors then may exercise their copyrights in any way they choose, including transferring necessary rights to the publisher of a journal that has accepted the article for publication.

If a publisher will not accept the terms, the author may direct that a waiver be granted, or consider another publisher. The majority of publishers permit, as a matter of policy, authors to self-archive their articles, and so they may easily comply with a campus OA policy (see <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>). Where the publisher does not support self-archiving by policy, authors can negotiate for their rights with the help of an addendum to publication agreement.

(3) Campus OA Policies promote academic freedom

1 For a more detailed perspective, see: Peter Suber, "A field guide to misunderstandings about open access," SPARC Open Access Newsletter, April 2009. <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/04-02-09.htm>

Under a campus OA policy, faculty scholars remain in control of what to publish, when to publish, where to publish, and how audiences can gain access to their published research. Authors who grant their institution a copyright license under an OA policy simply enable the institution to expand the audience for their published works. Conversely, campus OA policies also leave faculty free to limit their audience by opting out of the open-access provision if they so choose.

Campus OA policies specifically are designed *not* to interfere with the academic freedom of authors to publish where they choose. Through publisher self-archiving policy, author rights negotiation, or by waiver if necessary, authors have full freedom to publish where they choose under a campus open-access policy.

(4) Campus OA policies support journal publishing by expanding the audience for scholarly research

There is no evidence that policies promoting OA to **articles** will negatively affect subscriptions to **journals**. Most journal subscribers are academic libraries that need to deliver immediate access to the published version of scholarly articles, along with access to other material found in journals. Campus OA policies generally promote access to the author's final manuscript, providing access to audiences who cannot afford journal subscriptions, while leaving in place incentives for libraries to subscribe to full journals.

Additionally, experience indicates that widespread Open Access can coexist with continued journal subscriptions. To date, after more than a decade of open-access practices in some disciplines, there has been no data to suggest that Open Access to content also available through a journal is a significant factor in journal subscription cancellations. By comparison, however, high subscription prices – thousands of dollars for a single title, increasing at several times the rate of inflation – *have* been a significant factor in journal cancellations.

(5) Campus OA policies do not force publishers to change their underlying business models

Campus OA policies focus on ensuring global access to the results of scholarly research, not on imposing any specific business model on journal publishers. Publishers relying on traditional subscription access models have co-existed with OA policies in place for several years, and with OA practices active for much longer (c.f. arXiv and physics publishing). Many publishers are voluntarily – and successfully – going further. The number of OA journals supported by a variety of business models now tops 4,200, and several OA publishers are profitable. Thoughtful campus open-access policies are fully compatible with sustainable journal publishing.

(6) Campus OA policies do not require faculty to publish in OA journals

No campus OA policy currently requires authors to publish in an OA journal. Instead, these policies allow authors to publish in any journal they choose, including subscription journals, and exercise their rights as authors to deposit a copy of the article in an open-access repository.

Some OA policies do *encourage* faculty to publish in OA journals. And, some institutions have taken steps to support publication in OA journals, including establishing funds to support author fees where required for OA publication. Yet other institutions are hosting OA journals through their libraries and university presses.

(7) Campus OA policies are important for all disciplines

While all disciplines have unique characteristics, there is no condition that precludes a campus OA policy from being effective – and desirable – in any discipline. In fact, campus OA policies have been adopted with faculty support in schools of law, education, arts and sciences, and foreign language, at both public and private institutions, inside the U.S. and worldwide. (See <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/>).

(8) Complying with a campus OA policy is good for authors

Articles that are made accessible to everyone with an Internet connection as a result of a campus open-access policy can reach a vastly larger audience than those available only via traditional, closed subscription models. There is significant evidence that open-access articles are both downloaded and cited more often than non-OA articles, even more than non-OA articles from the same issues of the same journals (<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>). In addition to citations within the scholarly literature, OA can make articles more accessible to practitioners, journalists and policymakers, amplifying the real-world impact of faculty research.

(9) Complying with a campus OA policy is easy

Campus OA policies are designed to be easy for authors to comply with. They require faculty members to take just two steps: 1) Deposit manuscript in an OA repository, and 2) Retain the rights to do so. Institutions with experience in implementing OA policies have noted that it takes authors only about 10 minutes per paper to deposit an article (http://publicaccess.nih.gov/submit_process.htm). This number may be further reduced with experience and support from librarians, co-authors, or others.

An overwhelming majority of faculty say they would comply with an OA policy (<http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/11006/>). Experience has shown that most do so, though many campus OA policies offer an opt-out in the event where they cannot. The majority of journals permit author self-archiving as a matter of policy. In other cases, authors can negotiate for their rights by attaching an author addendum, a brief document that modifies a publisher contract to retain important rights for the author. Several such addenda are freely available online. (For example, see <http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/addendum.shtml>). On the rare occasion when a publisher objects to the institution's non-exclusive right to post, authors simply deploy the waiver clause from the policy and the work is published.

Importantly, the discussion that follows this exchange around the author's rights has led to changes in journal policies in more than one case – changes that increase the rights for authors and readers (<http://bit.ly/HJ09g>). Through endorsement by large blocs of faculty who support the right to self-archive, campus OA policies are making clear the importance to researchers of increasing access to this work, as a basic principle in the development of scholarly communication, and are contributing to a larger reform of publishing models, which a number of editors, as it turns out, are already considering.

(10) Faculty support campus OA policies

Many recent policies were initiated by faculty, and even adopted by unanimous faculty votes. Unanimous faculty votes resulted in strong OA policies at the Harvard Faculty of Arts and

Sciences, Harvard Law School, The University of Kansas, the Stanford School of Education, and MIT.

Low deposit rates with repositories, where a campus OA policy does not exist, do not necessarily denote a lack of faculty support for Open Access. Rather, low participation might as likely be interpreted as evidence of the need for a coherent, well-communicated approach to Open Access, which a campus open-access policy can provide. Authors are sometimes unaware of their options, unsure of their rights and responsibilities, or unaware of the benefits of Open Access.

(11) Campus open-access policies work

Over the past several years, a growing number of institutions, which appreciate the importance of retaining institutional research outputs and widening the exposure and impact of research results, have adopted a campus open-access policy. And, as the corpus of material that is made openly available grows, the number of studies giving evidence to the higher impact of open-access publications is also increasing. A list of studies that examine the impact of Open Access through archiving is available at “The Effect of Open Access and Downloads ('Hits') on Citation Impact: A Bibliography of Studies” (<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>).

For more information

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